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U.S. officer advises Contra chiefs

By Jeremiah O'Leary
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President Reagan said yesterday no law is being violated when a U.S. military officer on the staff of the National Security Council advises leaders of the Nicaraguan resistance forces.

But the disclosure in The New York Times that the officer is reportedly helping raise funds from private sources and is giving military advice to the Nicaraguan rebels is causing headaches at the NSC. The disclosure may have scotched the original plan to have the NSC administer the \$27 million in humanitarian aid in the supplemental spending bill President Reagan is expected to sign within 24 hours.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes said yesterday he does not know if a special agency is being created to channel the funds to the anti-Sandinista forces. The original administration plan was to use the NSC since the legislation prohibits the Central Intelligence Agency or Department of Defense from dispensing the money.

State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb had no comment on The New York Times report. However, Mr. Kalb denied that any decision has been reached on setting

up a new office at the State Department to disperse aid to the Nicaraguan resistance. "No decision has been made on when, why, or where on that subject," he said.

Some observers believe that administration officials, after publication of the article, may find it impolitic for the NSC, a White House agency, to handle aid to the resistance forces. The administration is likely now to funnel the funds through the State Department, Agency for International Development or some yet unformed special agency.

One legislator said he had been told the administering agency would be called the Agency for Humanitarian Assistance.

The White House is concerned that some newsmen know the identity of the officer, a veteran of intelligence operations regarding Central America and world terrorism. The New York Times, an official said, knows the officer's name but showed responsibility in not disclosing it.

This reporter also knows the man and is withholding his identity because of concern for his safety and well-being and that of his family. The officer is not covered by the Foreign Agents Act, which protects some U.S. officials, because he is in

the military service on assignment to the NSC.

The NSC officer took over the assignment of assisting Nicaraguan rebel forces when Congress enacted legislation forbidding the CIA to continue working with them.

On one occasion this year, this reporter was having lunch with two Nicaraguan Embassy officials in a restaurant near the White House and was surprised to see Adolfo Calero, commander in chief of the National Democratic Force, a 16,000-man guerrilla group, and the NSC officer sitting just two tables away. The officer declined to be interviewed.

There is no investigation being conducted by the White House or the NSC to discover which senior administration officials disclosed to The New York Times who the officer is and that he has "the Central American account" at the NSC.

White House press spokesman Larry Speakes told reporters yesterday that no member of the NSC has violated any law in dealing with the Nicaraguan opposition. President Reagan was asked about NSC staffers working with the Nicaraguan resistance forces as he signed the foreign aid bill. He answered, "That's a question that kind of traps me. We are not violating any laws."